

PARK COUNTY

Growing into the
21st Century

Growth in Park County

The impacts of new growth in Park County—both positive and negative—affect us all.

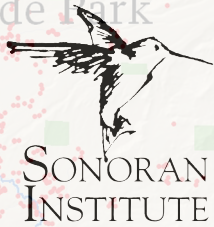
The Sonoran Institute, a non-profit organization with offices

in Montana, Colorado and Arizona, has compiled

this profile on the rate and character of growth in Park County to help citizens better understand these trends and their potential impacts. Similar information has been compiled for all of the counties in Western Montana. For more information on the Sonoran Institute log on to: www.sonoran.org

Information included in this Park County Profile was developed as a part of the Sonoran Institute and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy joint venture on growth and development in the West. For more information on the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, log on to: www.lincolninst.edu

LINCOLN INSTITUTE
OF LAND POLICY



PARK COUNTY'S FUTURE IT'S OUR LEGACY



The Choice is Ours

Because Park County is such a special place, it's clear that we will continue to see lots of growth. Growth can be a good thing – it can provide us, our children, and our children's children, with the opportunity to live and work in a prosperous and vibrant environment. But sprawling, poorly planned growth can spoil what we cherish about our communities and rural landscapes. In the past few decades, these are the facts about growth in Park County: 1) we're growing fast; 2) we're building homes farther out into the countryside; and, 3) the average home lot is consuming more land than ever before. If we keep growing at this pace and with this pattern of growth – our legacy to future generations will be a cluttered landscape of sprawling development.

But there's good news: we can take reasonable steps – steps that respect our inherent property rights and values – to shape the future, rather than letting the future shape us. We can accommodate new growth without losing what we hold most dear about this place: clean water, friendly neighborhoods, working ranches, magnificent views, excellent hunting and fishing, and good community and county services. The challenge is to avoid suburban sprawl that erodes those things. Instead, we can grow in a way that accommodates our development needs and adds great new neighborhoods to our existing communities. It's not about stopping new growth, it's about shaping a pattern of growth that respects and enhances our community character, our rural landscapes, and our fiscal well-being.

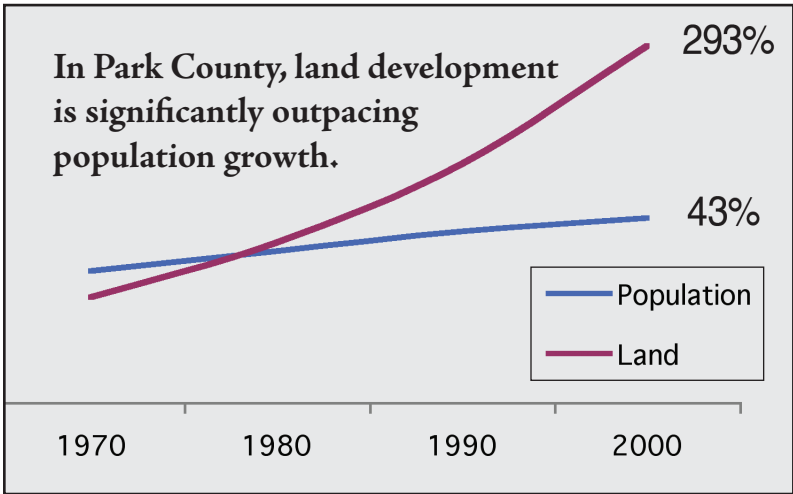




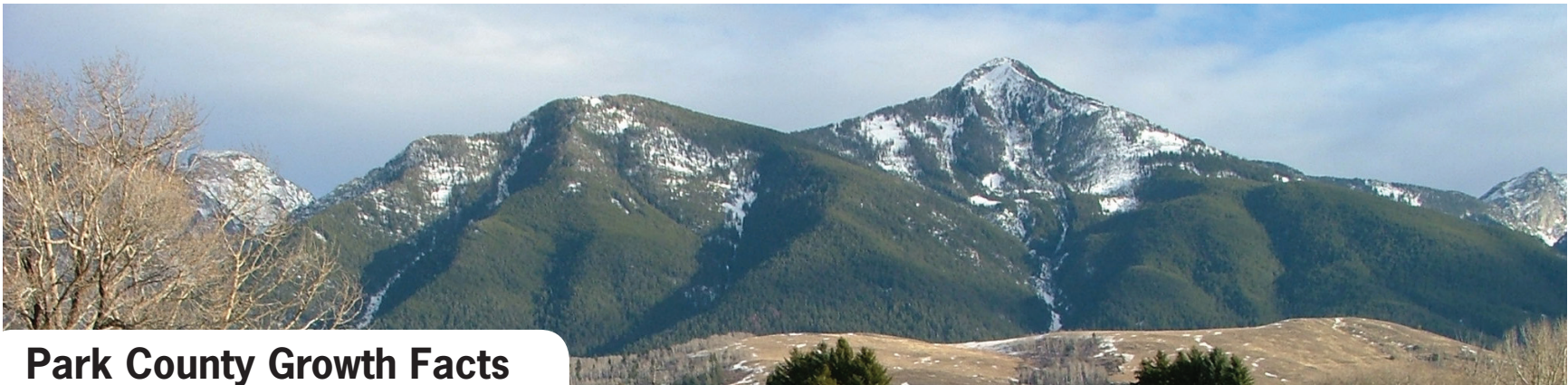
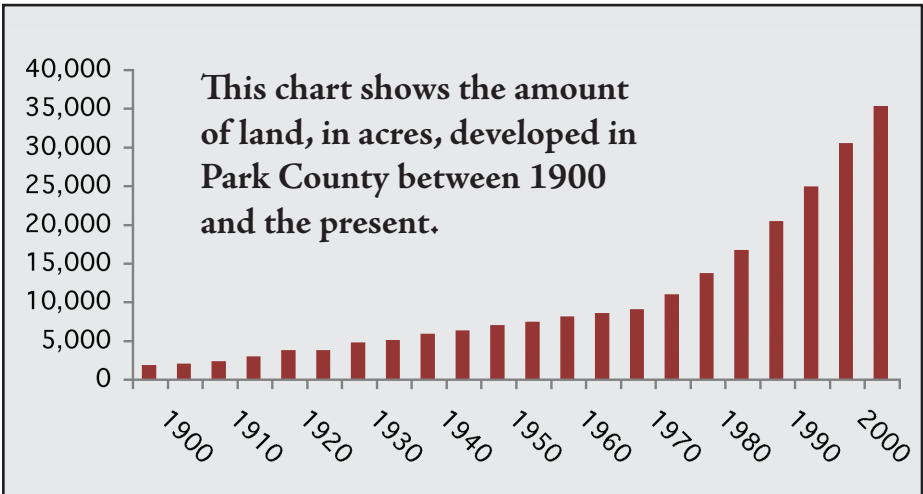
photo: Tim Crawford

Not only are we seeing more growth in our rural landscapes of western Montana, these subdivisions are talking up more and more space. While the population of Park County has grown by 43% since 1970, the amount of land developed has grown by 293%.

POPULATION GROWTH VS LAND DEVELOPMENT
PARK COUNTY, MT



DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME
PARK COUNTY, MT



Park County Growth Facts

since 1970	acres of developed land has increased 293%
since 1980	1,748 new residential lots created (99 more in review)
since 2000	995 new residential lots created - 56% of lots created in the last 36 years
since 2003	more than 585 residential lots annexed into City of Livingston
by 2025	more than 2,100 new homes projected
by 2025	nearly 5,000 new residents projected

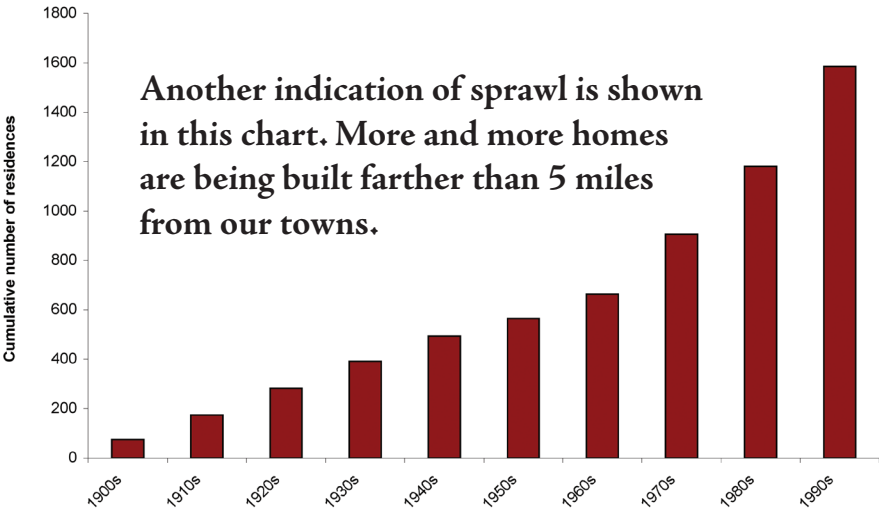
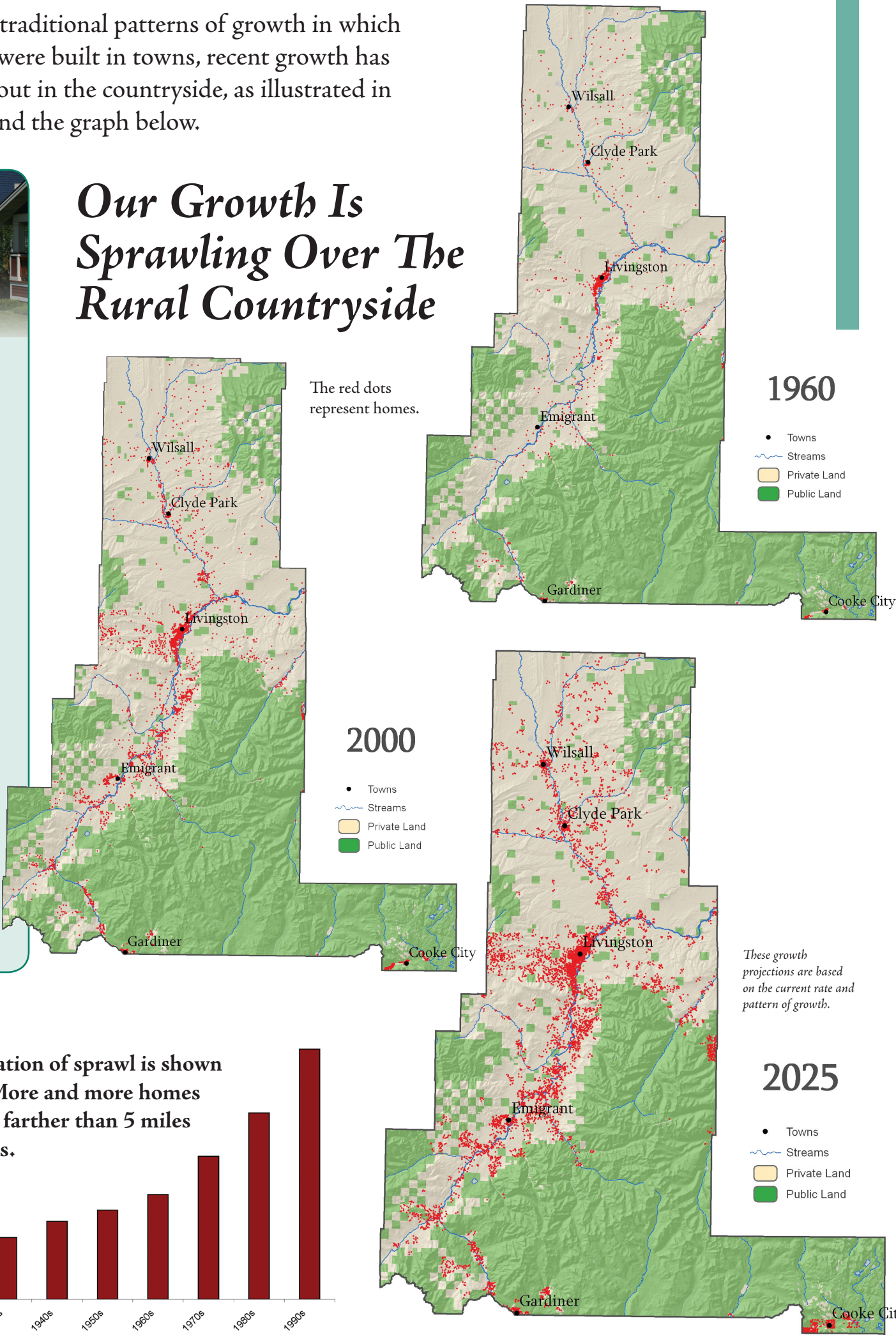
Sources: Livingston Planning Department, Park County Planning Office, Sonoran Institute growth projections

Compared to traditional patterns of growth in which new homes were built in towns, recent growth has occurred farther out in the countryside, as illustrated in the maps above and the graph below.



Our Growth Is Sprawling Over The Rural Countryside

- In contrast to rural sprawl, growth can take the form of pleasant, well-designed neighborhoods in our existing communities – with these benefits:
- ♦ Saving taxpayer dollars by avoiding the higher costs of far-flung infrastructure and services.
 - ♦ Sustaining Park County’s ranching heritage instead of paving over its agricultural lands.
 - ♦ Conserving rivers and water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic views by not cluttering and splintering the county with buildings, septic tanks and roads.
 - ♦ Keeping people and property safe from flooding and wildfire.



What Can YOU Do?

The Livingston City Commission and the Park County Commissioners, as well as the planning staffs of both city and county, deal with growth issues on a daily basis. They need to know where citizens stand on these issues. If you think that we should accommodate new growth in a manner that benefits our communities, conserves our natural resources and protects our quality of life and the fiscal well-being of the county, then let them know.

Here's how
to help
shape the
future of
Park County

You can learn more about city and county planning efforts by contacting:

Park County Planning Office – 406 222-4102, or log on at www.parkcounty.org Click on “Planning Office”

Livingston Planning Department – 406 222-4903, or log on at www.ci.livingston.mt.us/ Click on “Planning Department”

Growing the Next Montana

William Kittredge, Editor, The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology

As a boy, I remember my father returning to our home in Oregon from a trip to the Rockies and telling us that Montana was “The finest horse and cow country I ever saw.” In 1968, on my first drive into western Montana, I shared my father’s experience. I was floored by the big rivers, timbered distances and open meadowlands with ranch houses nestled back against the pines. What a place to live!

Then in the 1980s, on a flight out of Missoula, I sat next to an old rancher. “They’re turning that Bitterroot into hobby farms,” he said. He was moving to the sand hill country of Nebraska. “They won’t get there during my life.” I knew which “they” he was talking about. It was people like me, the newcomers.

Despite misgivings, Montana will keep evolving. People will keep coming. Their various priorities will often seem strange and alien to one another. How will we all get along together, as we must?

Let’s hope these newcomers come dedicated to preserving and even restoring what they came seeking in Montana – calm communities existing

in connection to a natural world that is reasonably functional.

It’s important to recall that good societies are usually centered on neighborliness that includes talking things out and grieving and celebrating together. We could begin by getting beyond the idea that relentless greed – whites against natives, cowmen against settlers, miners against the mine-owners – is right-minded. Economic, ethnic and class hostilities, while very real in a West that likes to imagine itself as egalitarian, are going to become increasingly less tolerable as people move in.

And move in they will. It’s been my experience that many understand the need to fund education, health care and services for the disadvantaged, and that they are eager to care for rivers, forests and agricultural lands. It’s been my experience that they value a chance to live in neighborhoods devoted to both diversity and fairness which leads me to believe that together we can reason our way to a future based on the ideals of cherishing one another and this magnificent part of the world, Montana.

